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LETTER DATED 20 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Ms. Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, published an article in The New York Times in its issue of 17 August 1998 concerning Iraq's relations with the United Nations and the Security Council, and the role of the United States in those relations. The article, which was a statement of the policy of the United States towards Iraq in the United Nations, contained a very serious distortion of the facts. It is therefore necessary to inform the members of the Security Council of the truth of the matter, which is as follows:

1. Ms. Albright states that the present confrontation is between Iraq and the United Nations and goes on to say: "... if [the Secretary-General and the Security Council] fail to persuade [Saddam Hussein] to back down, we will have laid the foundation for taking our own decisive action". Ms. Albright was evidently hinting that her country would use the United Nations as a means of putting into effect its own hostile plans with respect to Iraq and, if that failed, the United States would take power into its own hands and use force against Iraq. Ms. Albright made that clear on 14 August 1998 when she said in the course of a joint press conference with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan: "Let me ... make it clear that if necessary we will use force [against Iraq] on our timetable in response to threats at a time and place of our choosing." This blatant threat to use force against a State Member of the United Nations confirms once again that the United States will use the international machinery as a means of attaining its own interests and that, where the international machinery is in conflict with those interests, the United States will ride roughshod over the international machinery.

2. Ms. Albright has said that, on 4 August, she consulted with Mr. Butler, the Chairman of the Special Commission, about not carrying out the intrusive inspections after Iraq's decision on that day to suspend inspections.

Everybody is aware that Iraq decided to suspend cooperation with the inspections carried out by the Special Commission on 5 August and not on 4 August. Consequently, her consultation with Mr. Butler took place prior to Iraq's decision and her admission that such consultation took place confirms the information given in The Washington Post on 14 August 1998 to the effect that

Mr. Butler, the Chairman of the Special Commission, had had a conversation with her over a secure telephone line in the embassy of the United States in Bahrain, about matters related to the operational activities of the Special Commission. This affirmation deprives of any credibility the statement made by Mr. Butler on 14 August in which he denied that he had been given direction with respect to his decisions on operational matters and confirms that the Special Commission is subject to United States influence, even down to the smallest details of its day-to-day activities.

3. As part of her attempts to obscure the truth of the tragic effects of the sanctions on the Iraqi people, Ms. Albright claims that the "ration basket" received by Iraqis under the oil-for-food programme is equal in calorific value to the intake of the average United States citizen.

This perversion of the facts reminds us of her statement several months ago to the effect that the Iraqi presidential sites were used for the production and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. In answer to her allegation we only have to refer to two paragraphs of the report of the Secretary-General dated 1 February 1998 concerning the status of the implementation of the oil-for-food programme (S/1998/90). It says in paragraph 29: "Surveys by United Nations agencies and programmes continue to show that the nutritional situation of the Iraqi population is below internationally accepted standards." Paragraph 31 of the report says: "Further consideration of the nutritional requirements of the Iraqi population by United Nations nutritional experts has concluded that the target level was too low to provide the requisite nutritional security."

4. Ms. Albright says that the United States has successfully contained the Iraqi leadership for seven years by keeping in place the toughest multilateral sanctions in history.

We appeal to the intelligence of the members of the Security Council and ask: Is it permissible for a State that is a permanent member of the Council to say that it has maintained the toughest multilateral sanctions in history because it has a score to settle with the Iraqi leadership? Is it permissible for that to be done in the name of the members of the Council and in the name of the international community? We also wish to correct Ms. Albright's figures and to point out that the comprehensive sanctions against Iraq have been in place for eight years and not seven, since they began on 6 August 1990; at the time when Ms. Albright wrote her article the sanctions had already been in place for 8 years and 11 days.

5. We also wish to correct a final mistake by Ms. Albright, which does not appear to be political, by pointing out that Mr. Tariq Aziz is Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq and not Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative